Brook Green ward

Brook Green is exactly what it says it on the label: a brook running through a green. The brook in question was an offspring of Stamford Brook which enters the Thames on the western side of Furnivall Gardens, though today it's underground.

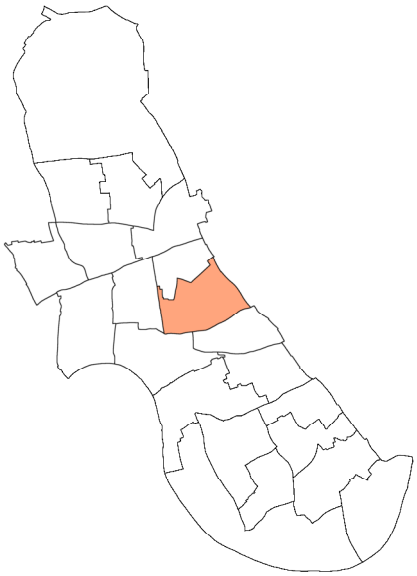
But this offshoot brook has some greater significance because it curved round: across Hammersmith Road, across Talgarth Road and then along the route approximately carved by Margravine Road, Yeldham Road and Chancellors Road. It became the boundary between the old Metropolitan Boroughs of Fulham and Hammersmith: Parr's Ditch.

When Brook Green was first established: that is, when houses sprang up around the green, London was so undeveloped that visitors could see as far as Harrow-on-the-Hill from there, and to the majestic pillars of Bazalgette's Hammersmith Bridge.

There are two distinct sections to Brook Green, reflected for around fifteen years after 1949 in its warding arrangements. The western end of the ward is Brook Green proper. That end is characterised by mainly large townhouses and a mesh of small streets spurring off the green and the undulating Blythe Road to the north. There are more single households here, a lower density of housing and more owner-occupiers.

The east end of the ward is dominated and shaped by the Olympia exhibition centre: a venue that has its own train station and is where local election votes often get counted. This end of the ward has a quite different character. There are the Palladian style mansion houses along Sinclair Road, running parallel to the borough boundary with Kensington, Maclise Road, Hazlitt Road and Gratton Road - the majority of them converted into flats. To some extent this is bedsit land, but fairly expensive bedsits and flats.

At this end of the ward can also be found Blythe House, the six-storey, Grade II listed Baroque former headquarters of the Post Office Savings Bank used in the Gary Oldman remake of Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy. Today it's used to store Victoria and Albert Museum artefacts, though it's still the sorting offices for the W14 postal district.



Olympia and Blythe House are truly imposing buildings occupying a sizeable footprint along the southern edge the ward. It's why they, along with other business parks office blocks and massive mansion blocks along Hammersmith Road, are one reason why forcing a merger of most of Brook Green with Avonmore ward was a bad (if unavoidable) idea prior to the 2002 elections.

Their presence establishes a clear boundary between the inhabited sections of the ward and Hammersmith Road. Yes, it can be crossed - any boundary can be crossed if you downgrade the importance of wards that make sense and representation that is as effective as possible. It just shouldn't be. Even what little housing there is in this part of the ward comes in massive scale: Latymer Court mansions on Hammersmith Road houses over one thousand residents in a 1932 art deco monolith. Not far behind, somewhat more modern - and modernist - blocks form the Windsor Way gated-off private estate.

These blocks add to the feeling of being in an urban canyon along the length of Hammersmith Road; that Brook Green begins some way behind them. The bustle at the Shepherd's Bush Road end of the ward makes you feel as though you are in the heart of a community whereas the heavily-trafficked and relatively sterile environment of Hammersmith Road feels very much like you're between communities, on a boundary.

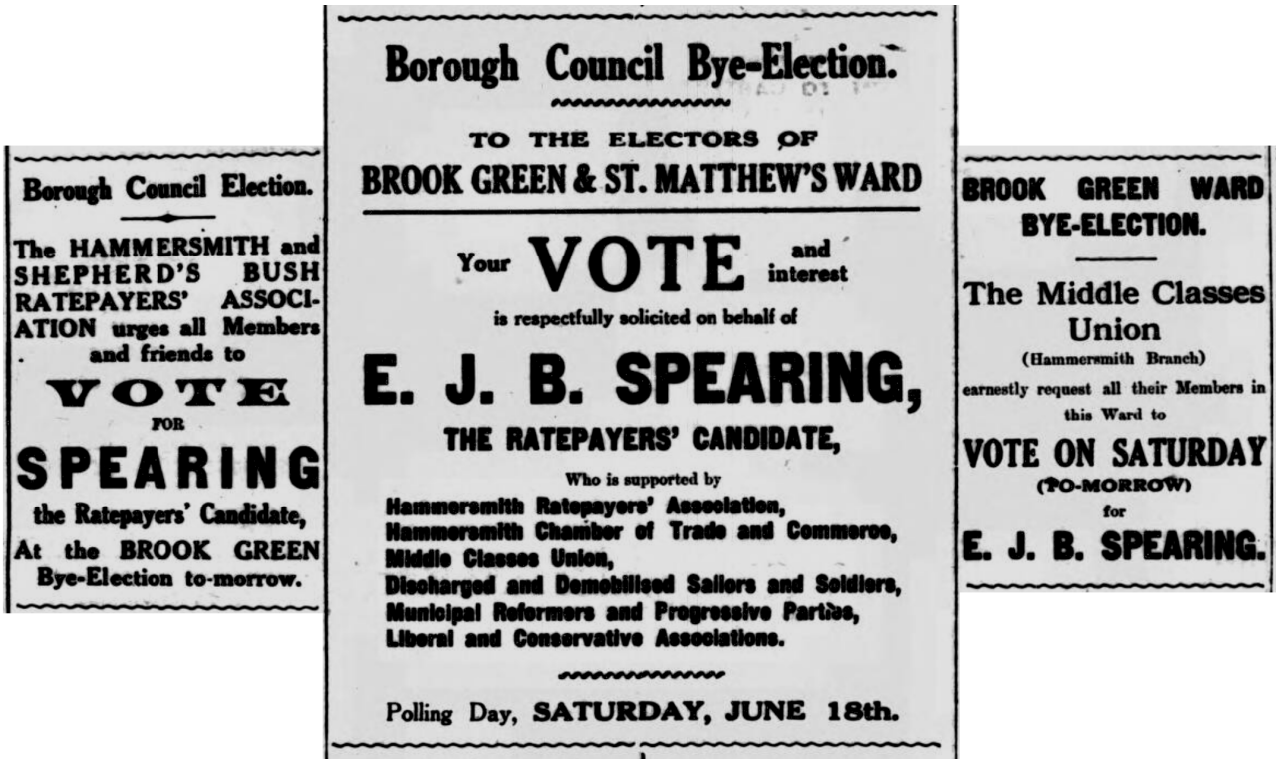
Between these two thoroughfares the streets clearly transition. Take Milson Road for example: at the Olympia end, its housing resembles those Palladian terraces just discussed. At its northern end there is a much lower housing density, with a more typically Hammersmith architectural style, close to the community hubs that are Masbro Road and St Matthew's Church, the parish of which gave its name to part of the larger Brook Green ward that existed prior to 1949.

Also in this transitional centre of the ward is the Springvale council estate: the only public housing of any size in Brook Green, though there are a couple of other small blocks in Milson Road and Springvale Terrace (separate from the Springvale estate). Springvale is an unusual estate comprising eight tenement blocks scattered around the eastern end of Blythe Road and adjoining streets: unusual because it so spread-out: a post-war infill estate.

The chart below epitomises the electoral balance of Brook Green: a ward that from 1970s to 2010 leant towards the Conservatives but which Labour managed to win every so often. Labour would have won a combined Brook Green-Olympia ward in 1962; they won the actual unified Brook Green in 1971; won a seat here in 1994 and both of them fairly easily in 1998; then one seat in Avonmore and Brook Green in 2014 and all three in 2018.

	Con	Lab	Lead
1949	3,261	2,231	**1,030** ●
1953	2,802	2,698	**104** ●
1956	2,029	1,985	**44** ●
1959	1,800	1,783	**17** ●
1962	1,550	1,699	**149** ●

Combined Brook Green and Olympia ward vote totals



From 1949 to 1964 the eastern end of Brook Green had its own ward: Olympia which, other than in its first contest, always voted Labour. Between them Olympia and Brook Green wards covered the current ward, give or take. That means that if we combine the votes from each, we begin to see how Brook Green swung to Labour throughout the 1950s:

But, just like Avonmore - once the only reliable Conservative ward in Fulham Borough - Brook Green has now flipped allegiance and it is Labour that nowadays usually wins the ward by similarly up and down margins.

The original Hammersmith ward on which Brook Green was founded: Brook Green and St Matthews, was vast by



the population numbers of its era, represented by eight councillors. Like neighbouring Barons Court in Fulham, this was always the Conservatives' (or Residents' Association's) best. Labour only managed to win it once - in their 1945 landslide - and normally they lost by large margins.

The better Labour, northern, half of this huge ward was cleaved off in 1949 to form Addison so core Brook Green should have been even safer than Brook Green and St Matthew's. In that election the Conservatives won it easily: 62% to Labour's 38%, while Olympia also went Tory a bit more narrowly: 57% to 43%.

But in 1953 an 11% swing flipped Olympia to Labour and a 4.5% swing in Brook Green halved the Conservative majority to just over 300. Brook Green then stayed where it was in 1956, 1959 and 1962 while Olympia kept improving for Labour. A clear east-west divide emerged.

In part, that was down to the post-war political realignment that made it acceptable - possibly even trendy, for more middle class areas to vote Labour. Demographically the wider W14 area: an area full of private tenants and leaseholders, was moving towards Labour as the demographic profile of renters changed and as the structure of families evolved.

In 2022, Brook Green returned as a ward in its own right, regaining the half that went into Avonmore and Brook Green and the half that transferred to Addison and the corner of the ward around the old West London Hospital opposite Novotel.

About 3,000 voters returned from Avonmore, 3,000 from places like Sinclair Road, Milson Road and Sterndale Road; and 300 from Luxembourg Gardens, Bute Gardens, and the southern end of Shepherd's Bush Road .

The re-creation of Brook Green should have been good news for the Conservatives. If the new boundaries made Addison a much better Labour prospect because of the loss of Conservative-leaning streets to Brook Green then the quid pro quo is that they make Brook Green better for the Conservatives - not by the same degree, but considerably better than Avonmore and Brook Green was. Brook Green became, after Sands End, the top target for the Tories in 2022.

Yet they didn't get close. Labour won almost 60% of the vote - their highest share ever by a long way. The Conservatives could barely manage 30%.

A 27-point majority is not marginal in anyone's book: it'd be the equivalent of an 18,000 constituency majority.

For Labour, Brook Green is a "floodplain" ward - by which I mean Labour doesn't need it for a majority: it's there to absorb Conservative votes like a flood plain, giving Labour a better chance in surrounding wards. By re-creating this far better Conservative ward, Labour became better placed in Addison and better placed in Avonmore.

But Brook Green doesn't seem to want to be an extra in Labour's landslides: it seems to be becoming firmly part of the Labour family. In 2026, Labour's vote fell by 17%.



FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 1935.

OPPOSITION TO HAMMERSMITH'S NEW TOWN HALL SITE

ORGANISED PROTEST BY BROOK GREEN RESIDENTS

PETITIONING THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

A STORM of indignation has arisen against the proposal to erect Hammersmith's new Town Hall on the tennis courts in the centre of Brook Green. The residents of Brook Green are up-in-arms against the idea, and an organised protest is to be made to the Hammersmith Borough Council. The whole of the residents of the area are being canvassed and it is expected all will sign the petition. Several letters from Brook Green residents expressing their protest against the scheme have been received by the "W.L.O." and are published in this issue.

The Hammersmith Borough Council's original site for the new Town Hall was on the South side of Brook Green near Bute House, this site being purchased in 1928 for about £36,000. At the last meeting of the Council just before Christmas it was decided to adopt a proposal contained in the General Purposes Committee's report that an exchange should be made with the London County Council of the original Town Hall site for another site on the tennis courts on Brook Green.

It was mentioned in the Committee's report that in June last Sir Brumwell Thomas, the architect of the new building, had suggested application being made to the London County Council for permission to erect the new Town Hall on a portion of Brook Green, and that the site purchased by the Council should be handed over in exchange. This led to an interview between officers of the County Council and the Borough Council, and a revised site plan was submitted to the County Council.

PROTESTS AT BROOK GREEN WARD MEETING.

Alarmed at the prospect of the new Town Hall being placed in the middle of Brook Green, there was a larger attendance than usual at the annual meeting of the Brook Green Ward of the South Hammersmith Conservative Association held at No. 2, The Broadway, on January 8th. The meeting was further augmented by other supporters and residents from the vicinity of Brook Green—who were also desirous of registering a vigorous protest against the proposed scheme. Councillor J. G. Jones was in the chair, supported on the platform by Councillor A. Saxby and Miss I. Soutar (Hon. Secretary).

In view of the concern of all present respecting the Town Hall question, the usual business of the meeting was transacted with marked expedition. The annual reports and accounts were formally submitted, and the amount to be passed to the main Association agreed. No changes were made in the officers of the Association, and the following were re-elected: Chairman, Councillor J. G. Jones; Vice-Chairman, Mrs. B. J. Samels; Hon. Treasurer, Councillor A. Saxby; Hon. Secretary, Miss I. Soutar. Delegates to the Executive Council of the Association: Mr. W. A. Amor, Mrs. Berry, Miss P. Bourne, Mr. H. E. Granger, Mrs. B. J. Samels, Councillor A. Saxby.

Following this the meeting immediately proceeded to discuss the question of the new Town Hall site, and Councillor Jones read the report of the General Purposes Committee, as published in the official Borough Council agenda, and also the resolution passed at the meeting of the Borough Council on December 19th, whereby the Council agreed that the new Town Hall should be built on the space at present occupied by the tennis courts in the centre of Brook Green.

Mrs. Barron was the first speaker, and she expressed her strong indignation at the proposal, and described it as a monstrous one. She urged the need for vigorous and immediate protest against the scheme, and stated that her attitude already had the support of practically every resident on Brook Green. She would strenuously oppose Brook Green being interfered with in any way.

Her remarks were enthusiastically applauded by all present, and every subsequent speaker endorsed her attitude. These included Mr. Granger, Mr. James Howe, Mr. Potter, Col. Firmin, Dr. Shepheard, Mr. E. Silas and Mr. Exley—none of whom had a single word to say in favour of the new scheme.

The meeting also discussed future action with a view to inducing the Borough Council to abandon their new idea, and a resolution was passed, which it was agreed should be presented to the Borough Council by a deputation of residents from Brook Green. Councillor Jones promised to introduce the deputation to the Council. The members of the deputation, and a committee, was elected forthwith, and many offers of financial support were made.

At the termination of these proceedings a formal resolution, expressing whole-hearted disapproval that Brook Green be altered in any way from its present state, was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

THEY SEEK YOUR VOTES

Tenants' champion will fight this Ward

DISSATISFACTION with the Council's rent policy has led Hammersmith Council Tenants' Association to back an Independent candidate in the three-cornered by-election battle in Olympia Ward next Thursday (March 16).

The man the Association supports is 29-year-old Simon H. Knott, a stockbroker, of Bridge - avenue Mansions, Hammersmith.

An Association spokesman told the Gazette and Post: "We are hoping to start a new movement in the borough. Our main object is to put housing and rents on the public platform."

Mr. Knott stood as Independent Liberal Candidate for Barons Court in the 1959 General Election. He has twice contested municipal elections at Hammersmith — as a Tory in 1956 and a Liberal in 1959.

He is the present prospective L.C.C. and Parliamentary Liberal candidate for Barons Court.

Mr. Knott is married and has one son.

3 will fight

Other candidates in the three-cornered fight are Miss Winnifred E. Hardingham, Tory, and Mr. Len Stanley, Labour.

Miss Hardingham of Aynhoe Mansions, Brook - green, Hammersmith, a civil servant, has lived in the borough for 40 years.

She has contested the borough elections in 1953, 56, and 59.

Miss Hardingham serves on the governing and managing bodies of 11 Hammersmith schools.

She is also interested in old people's welfare.

Mr. Stanley was born in Hammersmith and has lived most of his life in the borough.

A cost accountant, he is financial secretary of the North Hammersmith Labour Party, and treasurer of Olympia Ward.

He is a manager of several Junior and Infants' Schools. He also takes great interest in the welfare of the elderly people in Hammersmith.

A staunch Trade Unionist, he was for many years a member of the clerical branch of the National Union of Theatrical and Kinema Employees, and is now a member of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers.

The by-election is caused by the death of Cllr. Ernie Freeman, a Labour member.

In any other political era a loss of support on that scale would spell a certain Conservative win. But their vote fell too - only by 2% and, given the size of the majority Labour was defending from 2022, they hung on by a comfortable enough 300 votes.

On the face of it, Labour's drop benefited minor parties. The one Green candidate took 14% - one of their weaker showings. Reform won just over 6% - another very weak debut, and an independent won 4%. Horatio Lovering, a former advisor to Rishi Sunak when he was Prime Minister, was one of the defeated Tory candidates.

But this is still a relatively new phenomenon. Brook Green, had it still existed then, would have voted Conservative in 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014; only in 2018 would it have (narrowly) gone Labour.

The ward is a perfect specimen of how London has turned against the Conservatives, though it seems plausible that this is the sort of area that could well switch back when Council Tax soars and other mooted taxes on homes such as the so-called "Mansion Tax" and Land Value Tax are introduced by Labour. Brook Green would be clobbered by such taxes, along with most of Fulham.

What had caused the Conservatives to weaken so much in what was traditionally their strongest corner of the borough? The answer is similar to that of Avonmore but, to reprise, several forces have been at work.

44% of residents live in rented accommodation here; they are more transient generally. 21% of homes here are still owned by either the council or housing associations. Note that those two figures represent just under two thirds of Brook Green voters.

There have been relatively few controversies in Brook Green; few by-elections, at least in the period since the war (quite a few in the early days as councillors from here routinely got elevated to Aldermen and had to vacate their seats as a result).

A VICTORY FOR LABOUR

LABOUR won the three-cornered fight in North Hammersmith's Olympia Ward by-election last week.

The Labour candidate, Mr. Len Stanley, polled 868 votes against Miss E. Hardingham's (Conservative) 565, and the Hammersmith Tenants' Association Independent candidate Mr. Simon Knott's 138.

Percentage of the electorate that turned out to vote was 30.5.

The result means that Labour will keep the seat made vacant by the death of Labour Cllr. Ernie Freeman.

Summary of results for Brook Green ward

	Con	Lab	LD	Grn	Oths
1900	67.0		33.0		
1903	62.7		37.3		
1903 By	59.4		40.6		
1906	49.2				50.8
1909					Unop
1912	65.6				34.4
1912 By	62.9				37.1
1919	44.2	25.8			34.2
1921 By					100.0
1922					Unop
1925					Unop
1928		19.3			80.7
1931		30.3			69.7
1934		35.5			64.5
1935 By		35.7			64.3
1937		40.9			59.1
1945	61.7	38.3			
Brook Green ward					
1949	57.2	42.8			
1953	57.2	42.8			
1956	57.5	42.5			
1959	43.1	58.1	41.9		
1962	56.9	43.1			
Olympia ward					
1949	57.4	42.6			
1953	46.0	54.0			
1956	41.3	52.3	6.4		
1959	40.5	59.5			
1961 By	36.0	55.3			8.8
1962	38.1	61.9			
1964	51.1	48.9			
1968	64.7	35.3			
1971	49.3	50.7			
1974	50.0	34.1	15.9		
1978	62.3	33.7			
1982	47.1	23.7	19.7	3.1	6.3
1986	39.3	32.7	19.6		8.4
1990	54.5	37.2	8.2		
1994	41.1	43.4	15.5		
1998	42.1	47.5	10.5		
2022	30.3	57.0	12.7		
2026	28.4	41.0	6.3	14.3	10.0

Probably the biggest uproar occurred in the 1930s, when councillors, unsatisfied with their gothic but fairly small Town Hall a the end of Shepherd's Bush Road, searched for a new site and arrived at Brook Green - the green itself - as their favoured choice.

There was a huge uproar, not just over the site but because the council stumped up £36,000 to purchase the land. That's about £2.6m in today's prices though it doesn't come close when factoring-in the vast premium that has been added to land in W14 since. There's a case that Brook Green is now priceless as no politician would survive even floating the idea of building on it these days. Eventually, Hammersmith Council decided to build the new town hall near the riverside.

Centrist voters have played a big part in the political trajectory of Brook Green. When the Liberals first contested the ward in 1974 all their support was drawn from Labour - and the Conservatives regained the ward as a result. When the Liberals didn't stand in 1978, their 1974 voters did not switch to Labour: they lined up behind the Conservatives. Much of that was due to the deep unpopularity of Labour in 1978 - most of these Liberal to Conservative voters were floaters wishing to punish James Callaghan's government.

But from then on there was a constant centre party presence in Brook Green. This pulled the Conservatives, not Labour, down - Labour was only damaged when the Green Party contested the ward. The average Labour share in the five elections between 1982 and 1998 the Liberal Democrats or Alliance contested Brook Green was only 36% - not usually strong enough to win. Labour has needed the Lib Dems to stand and the Green Party to not stand in order to beat the Tories.

The huge swing against the Conservatives in London, especially since the 2016 EU referendum, but dating back somewhat further, may well make these their very worst years in London: we're too close to them to be able to see clearly. But if Labour becomes the natural party of very affluent wards like Brook Green, then what role is there for any other party unless, in so becoming, Labour leaches some of its traditional support at the same time. A party that represents everybody represents nobody.

No matter how much Labour might believe it can be all things to all Londoners it cannot in the long-run because politics is the crucible in which different interests and values and priorities collide against each other to discover which is closer to the national interest every few years. Voters claim to want consensus and cross-party co-operation but the reality is that there should almost never be a consensus. When there appears to be it is often only because one side or another has moved away from what it was created to stand for.



Brook Green

The Conservatives need slightly more than a 5% swing to win Brook Green. That's doable provided a) that they start gaining, not losing votes; b) that the Greens or another left of centre party can maintain or build on its impact and c) they keep a lid on Reform's support. Brook Green is still about nine percentage points more Conservative than the borough which means they will always have a shot at winning here.

It's also the case that if the Conservatives can fall from a lead of nine points in 2010 to a deficit of nearly twenty eight in barely a decade, the reverse can occur - at least in theory. The really big problem the Conservatives have though is that their vote is increasingly stacked in their remaining South Fulham enclaves while Labour's has not only swelled considerably, but is far better distributed throughout this borough.

Rollcall of Brook Green ward councillors

including Olympia ward (1949-1964) and Brook Green and St Matthew's ward (1900-1949)

2026
- Stala Antoniades
- Adam Lang

2022
- Stala Antoniades
- Adam Lang

1998
- Polly Hicks
- Gerald Johnson

1994
- Tony Hennessy
- Gerald Johnson

1990
- Tony Hennessy
- Peter Prince

1986
- Tony Hennessy
- Peter Prince

1982
- Tony Hennessy
- Peter Prince

1978
- Tony Hennessy
- William Smith

1974
- Robert Field
- William Smith
- Nigel Waterson

1971
- Martin Hudson
- Dick Rayner
- Joseph Taylor (Lab

1968
- Robert Field
- Leslie Heading
- Gavin Tait

1964
- Arthur Belsham
- Robert Field
- Leslie Heading

1962
- Arthur Belsham
- Robert Field
- Leslie Heading

1959
- Arthur Belsham
- Robert Field
- Leslie Heading

1956
- Arthur Belsham
- Leslie Heading
- E. Tebay

1953
- Arthur Belsham
- Leslie Heading
- G. Messervy

1949
- Arthur Belsham
- J. Chambon
- Leslie Heading

Olympia ward

1962
- Jean Henry
- Harry Solomans
- Leonard Stanley

1961B
- Leonard Stanley

1959
- Ernest Freeman
- W. Grant
- Robert Oak

1956
- Ernest Freeman
- Violet Grant
- Charles Parsons

1953
- Gordon Bamford
- L. Glover
- Violet Grant

1949
- G. Jones
- M. Jones
- L. Lall

Brook Green and St Matthew's ward

1945
- L. Glover
- L. Kirby
- A. Lucas
- W. Lyons
- F. Slatter
- L. Thompson

1937
- Arthur Belsham
- Hilda Barron
- Joseph Jones
- Sydney Rayner
- Arthur Saxby
- Sydney Wood

1935B
- Sydney Wood

1934
- Arthur Belsham
- Horace Durrant
- Joseph Jones
- Sydney Raynor
- Arthur Saxby
- Thomas Spearing

1931
- John Bedford
- Arthur Belsham
- Thomas Courtney
- Thomas Irons
- Sydney Raynor
- Edwin Spearing

1928
- John Bedford
- Richard Bevan
- Patrick Grey
- Thomas Irons
- Edwin Spearing
- Joseph Woolerton

1925
- Richard Bevan
- Patrick Grey
- Thomas Irons
- Frederick Ratcliffe
- Edwin Spearing
- Joseph Woolerton

1922
- Richard Bevan
- Patrick Grey
- Thomas Irons
- Frederick Ratcliffe
- Edwin Spearing
- Joseph Woolerton

1919
- Alexander Beaumont
- Edmond Coke
- Oswald Hanson
- Thomas Marsh
- Charles White
- Joseph Woolerton

1912
- Thomas Bendon
- Richard Bevan
- Henry Foreman
- Oswald Hanson
- Edwin Jones
- Thomas Marsh
- Henry Watkins
- Charles White
- Joseph Woolerton

1909B
- William Jewell

1909
- Richard Bevan
- Dean Clements
- Joseph Jones
- Samuel Leah
- Thomas Marsh
- Walter Martin
- Frederick Ratcliffe
- Norman Shairp
- Richard Walker

1909B
- Hiram Ellis

1906
- Richard Bevan
- William Burns
- Arthur Carter
- Alfred Cockerell
- George Keogh
- Frederick Ratcliffe
- William Thomas
- Richard Walker
- Henry White

1903
- Thomas Bendon
- Richard Bevan
- Alfred Cockerell
- George Earsdon
- John Howell
- Thomas Marsh
- John C. Platt
- Alfred White
- William Williams

1900
- Thomas Bendon
- James Chamberlain
- Alfred Cockerell
- George Earsdon
- Ransom Hamilton
- John Howell
- Thomas Martindill
- Harry Simpson
- Alfred White